

Within the past few years, Rep. Slaughter made significant progress in drawing national attention to the problem of sexual assault of women in the military. In March, 2004, the Congresswoman led a hearing on this issue and presented a report containing the transcript of the hearing to U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Following the hearing, in May 2004, the U.S. House unanimously passed an amendment championed by Rep. Slaughter requiring the Pentagon to develop a comprehensive and uniform policy to prevent and respond to sexual assault of women in the military. Since enactment of this policy, Rep. Slaughter has hosted annual briefings whereby DoD has presented its report findings and progress on this issue to Congress.

In May 2005, Rep. Slaughter introduced an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2006 National Defense Authorization bill (H.R. 1815) to ensure that the DoD provides better care to military victims of sexual assault. Specifically, this language requires the Secretary of Defense to assess the availability and accessibility within assigned or deployed units of trained personnel, rape evidence kits, testing supplies for pregnancies and STIs, as well as other critical resources. It also requires the Secretary of Defense to develop a plan to enhance accessibility of supplies, trained personnel, and transportation resources in response to sexual assaults occurring in deployed units. The language was part of an en bloc amendment offered by Chairman Hunter, which was approved by voice vote.

A couple years ago, Rep. Slaughter introduced an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2007 National Defense Authorization bill (H.R. 5122) requiring DoD to include the results of disciplinary action, including Article 15s and court-martial convictions, as part of the annual report on sexual assault in the military. The amendment was once again part of an en bloc amendment offered by Chairman Hunter and approved by voice vote.

In January, Rep. Slaughter led a bipartisan effort calling on the U.S. State Department and the Department of Defense to establish protocols for protecting the rights of women sexually assaulted by US contractors overseas.

In February 2009, Rep. Slaughter reintroduced her comprehensive legislation entitled the Military Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Act, H.R. 840, to address multifaceted aspects of both sexual assault and domestic violence within the military in order to ensure that women, and men, are not subject to violence and assault by their fellow members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

In May of 2010, Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28) introduced H.R. 5347, The Force Protection and Readiness Act, a set of new measures to deal with the epidemic of rape and sexual assault in the military.

Four of these provisions, based on the Defense Task Force on Sexual Assault in the Military Services report released in December 2009, have been included in the House National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011, which was reported out by the House Armed Services Committee.

The Force Protection and Readiness Act will:

- Create confidentiality protocols to protect victim rights and raise the propensity for a soldier to report their case by ensuring they receive adequate legal assistance and appropriate privileged communications with victim advocates.
- Ensure ease of base or organization transfer for victims or the offender thereby decreasing fear of retaliation and bolstering victim reports.
- Require that each service branch employ highly qualified experts to train and advise JAGs to handle and try sexual assault cases effectively.
- Ensure more complete sexual assault data reporting to better track DoD-wide reports and case disposition.
- Establish a universal hotline to facilitate victim reporting and provide victims an immediate connection with sexual assault response coordinators.
- Sets a DoD wide standard for victim advocate training to ensure that those charged with helping victims of sexual assault are held to the highest standard.

Rep. Slaughter has successfully championed efforts to prevent sexual assault in the military, and she will continue to lead this fight. Women serving in the military deserve no less.